



City of San Diego Public Utilities
COMMERCIAL-MULTI FAMILY OUTDOOR WATER
CONSERVATION REBATE PROGRAM

**Sustainable Landscape-Turf Replacement
Rebate Guidelines**
Rebate--\$1.50/SF (up to 6,000 SF & \$9,000)

Reduce outdoor water use, keep landscape more attractive and healthy and save money on the water bill by replacing thirsty turfgrass with a sustainable and water wise ornamental landscape. City of San Diego Public Utilities Department commercial and multifamily (greater than four units) customers can receive a rebate for replacing turfgrass with sustainable and water wise landscape. Funding for a limited number of rebates is available through a State of California grant and will be distributed on a first come, first served basis until exhausted. This program is subject to change without prior notification. Read below for program requirements and application process. Rebate check will be sent to the customer of record 6-8 weeks after application and post-installation site visit are successfully completed. If you have questions after reading these guidelines, please call 619-533-7485 or e-mail waterconservationrebates@sandiego.gov.

Applicant's water account must be in good standing and program requirements must be met to be eligible for rebates. Customer must agree to and sign the application agreement before rebate is administered. Changes made related to rebate program must comply with all laws, codes, policies, covenants, conditions, and restrictions applicable to property. Please consult with a tax advisor for questions about potential tax implications associated with rebates.



Rebate Process

1. **Get an application...** Go to the City's [Water Conservation Website](#) to download the Commercial Outdoor Rebate Program Application. Submit application to Water Conservation Program.
2. **Get a survey and pre-site inspection and approval to begin project...** After the application is received a scheduler will contact you to schedule a free water conservation survey and pre-site inspection. A Water Conservation representative will evaluate the proposed project area and if qualifications are met you will be given a project start date, at which time the 120 day conversion period begins.
3. **Submit plans within 45 days** Scaled design plans are due to the Water Conservation Program within 45 days of the start date. See below for more information on plan submittals.

4. **Complete the project and schedule a post-installation visit within 120 days...** Call 619-570-1999 to schedule a post-installation site visit once project is complete. Project must be completed and a site visit requested before the 120 day conversion period is over. A Water Conservation representative will verify square footage and that program requirements are met. At this visit please provide representative with original itemized sales receipts and invoices from landscape professionals which must include vendor and/or company name, contractor license #, purchase date, date of services, itemized list of products purchased, description of services rendered.
5. **Receive a rebate...** Once application is deemed complete and post-installation site visit is successfully completed please allow 6-8 weeks for the rebate to arrive in the mail.

Program Requirements

- Receive \$1.50/SF (up to 6,000 SF) after replacing existing high water using turfgrass with water wise ornamental landscape (using plants that are considered to be moderate, low, or very low in water use requirements). Minimum project conversion area is 1000 SF.
- Existing turf in project area must be living and an in-ground irrigation system must be operational at the time of the pre-site inspection. At maturity, plant density of the converted area must cover at least 50% of the project area. Tree canopy coverage (existing and new trees) will not be counted in the 50% plant coverage calculation.
- Project must replace high water use turf with plants that have moderate, low, or very-low watering requirements as defined in the 2010 Edition UC Davis Arboretum All-Stars brochure, the [Water Use Classification of Landscape Species Reference \(WUCOLS\)](#) or other accepted reference of plant water use).
- A scaled design plan must be completed by a landscape designer, landscape architect, certified landscape irrigation auditor or landscape contractor, and must include:
 - ✓ Plant names (common and scientific) with plant symbols showing coverage at 75-100% maturity and WUCOLS page reference to verify water use level
 - ✓ Mulch type and permeable hardscape details
 - ✓ Estimated Total Water Use (ETWU)
 - ✓ Maximum Applied Watering Allowance (MAWA) – Maximum 70% of ET
 - ✓ Irrigation plan with hydrozones and head or emitter placement and equipment list (if no irrigation is planned – show hydrozones only)
 - ✓ North arrow
- Converted areas must be permeable to air and water (hardscapes must be permeable - ie. gravel, loose flagstone, decomposed granite). Permeable weed barriers are required under hardscapes.
- If project will be irrigated, conversion of existing overhead spray irrigation system to micro-irrigation or low application rate rotating nozzles is highly recommended. The newly converted area must be on a separate irrigation valve from remaining turf. System must be capped if improved area will not have irrigation.
- Mulch must be spread to minimum depth of three inches where new plant material is installed unless a spreading groundcover is indicated.



- Pre- and post-site inspections are required as well as submittal of original receipts, invoices, and total project costs. Projects must be completed within 120 days from the date Water Conservation Program representative approves start of project at survey/pre-site inspection.
- Project site must be maintained for a minimum of five years, or for the duration of ownership of the property (whichever is shortest.) Failure to meet this requirement may require customer to refund all or a portion of the rebate. Project site shall be available for future inspection and monitoring (up to five years) by Public Utilities.
- A variance to current water use restrictions will be issued for a maximum of 90 days after project completion to allow for healthy plant establishment, however a variance will not be issued for plant establishment during the hottest months of the year – July 1-Sept 30.
- Photos of the project may be taken by Public Utilities staff to illustrate transitions from thirsty landscapes to attractive, water wise landscapes. Addresses to project sites participating in the rebate program will be available to the public. Customer names will not be made public or associated with the address.

What does not qualify for a rebate?

- High water using plants (as classified by WUCOLs)
- Artificial turf
- Vegetable gardens
- Back yard turf conversion
- Exposed soil surfaces (exceptions made to accommodate specific garden design motifs)
- Impermeable surfaces such as bricks and flagstone mortared into place, or concrete. (Pervious surfaces that are part of the project area are eligible for rebate so long as total project area includes living plant coverage area at maturity of at least 50%)
- Planting of invasive species that have potential to spread aggressively, especially in areas interfacing wild lands, canyons, open space, or parks. For list of invasive species go to the [California Integrated Pest Control website](#) or the [San Diego County Invasive Ornamental Plant Guide](#).



What is a sustainable landscape?

Sustainable landscapes are intended to be in balance with the local climate and environment and designed to require few added resources, thereby reducing waste and minimizing air, water and soil pollution. The Sustainable Landscape-Turf Replacement Rebate Program is intended to encourage the replacement of high water using turf grass with ornamental plant material that thrives with little to moderate amounts of water during the extended dry periods that characterize San Diego's climate. The scaled use of turf, with a focus on the use of water wise plant material, abundant mulch, efficient irrigation and reduced runoff are all components of sustainable landscaping. The objective of this rebate program is to encourage a reduction in water use through the conversion of grass to water wise plant material, while maintaining a high level of living landscape to benefit the environment.

Benefits of converting turf to sustainable and water wise landscape.

Turf grass is often the optimal choice for sports and recreational areas, but turf - especially cool season varieties such as tall fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, red fescue, or perennial ryegrass - require frequent watering and maintenance. The Sustainable Landscape -Turf Replacement Rebate Program focuses on the replacement of thirsty turf grass material with ornamental water wise plants that use a moderate to very low amount of water. Additional steps such as converting overhead sprinklers to low flow micro-irrigation and installing a Smart Controller can further reduce water and energy use and help control irrigation runoff.

How much water does a sustainable landscape save?

Typically, cool season turf grass uses between 14 and 40 gallons of water per square foot annually, depending on site conditions. Once established, low to moderate water using plants can require less than half of the water required by cool season turf grass.

Costs that are covered by the sustainable landscape rebate.

The rebate is \$1.50/SF of turf grass that is replaced with ornamental water wise landscape--up to a maximum of 6,000 SF and \$9,000 per customer. Do-it-yourself labor costs are not eligible for rebate. Rebate amount will not exceed total project costs.

